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AUSTRALIA

Patents Act 1990

ARISTOCRAT LEISURE INDUSTRIES PTY LTD

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Invention Title:

Player information delivery

The invention is described in the following statement:

Player information delivery

Introduction

The present invention relates to gaming consoles or gaming machines of the type known as slot machines arranged to play a large variety of card related and other gambling games and in particular the invention provides an
5 improvement to a game played on such a machine or console.

Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to come up with innovative game features that add interest to the games provided on such machines in order to keep the players amused and
10 therefore willing to continue playing the game.

Description of the Prior Art

Gaming or poker machines have been well known in some jurisdictions such as the state of New South Wales in Australia and Nevada in the United States for many years and more recently such machines have
15 gained considerable popularity in a growing number of new jurisdictions with quite substantial amounts of money wagered on these machines. There is a growing tendency for State Governments to legalise the use of gaming machines by licensing operators, with resulting revenue gains through licence fees and taxation of monies invested. The licensed operation of
20 gaming machines is the subject of State legislation and regulation. This regulation most always dictates a minimum percentage payout for a gaming machine. For example, in New South Wales a minimum of 85% of monies invested must be returned as winnings, and manufacturers of gaming machines therefore must design their machines around these regulatory
25 controls.

With the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply the various existing and new venues. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various
30 games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games which are popular with players, as a mechanism for improving sales.

Many various strategies have been tried in the past to make games more enticing to players, including the commonly known double-up feature,
35 whereby, if a player wins a particular game, they can then risk the winnings

of that game in a double-or-nothing mode in which they gamble on a subsequent, and often different, game such as whether a red or black card will be the next card drawn.

Other techniques adopted in the past have been to provide complexity
 5 in the numbering and combinations of indicia which would result in a win, thereby hoping to convince the player that there is a greater chance of winning and to keep their interest in a particular game.

Throughout this specification and claims when the term "morph" is used, it is intended to indicate a transformation or metamorphosis from a
 10 current image or character to a new image or character.

Summary of the Invention

According to a first aspect the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being
 15 arranged to play a game wherein one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display means and, if a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterised in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being independent of
 20 and appearing asynchronously with respect to the game being played and arranged to appear super imposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed.

According to a second aspect the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control
 25 images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display means and, if a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterised in that an auxiliary display means is provided, and an animated
 30 character is periodically displayed on the auxiliary display means to communicate information to the player, the character being independent of and appearing asynchronously with respect to the game being played and arranged to appear super imposed over any other information currently displayed on the auxiliary display at the time the character is displayed.

35 In embodiments in which the character is displayed on a second screen, there may also be interaction between the character and the main

game when, for example, awarding bonuses, and in particular, the character may move to the main game screen to perform an action such as kicking the reels of a spinning reel game to award a bonus.

5 According to a third aspect, the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display means and, if a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize, the console
10 characterised in that a player console interface is provided which operates asynchronously with the game to provide information to the player independently of the game.

According to a fourth aspect, the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control
15 images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display means and, if a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize, the console characterised in that a player console interface is provided that operates
20 asynchronously with the game to provide winning opportunities in addition to those provided by the main game.

According to a fifth aspect, the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being
25 arranged to play a game wherein a random event is displayed and if the random event matches a predetermined event, a prize is awarded, the console being characterised in that a user interface control means is provided which operates functionally independently of the game control means, the user interface means including:

- 30 a) a monitoring mode in which it is substantially inactive while it waits for a trigger condition to cause it to transform to another mode;
b) an active mode in which it communicates information to the player regarding a current game being played or a system feature or function.

In various embodiments of the invention, a character is used to communicate information to the player and the character may take a variety of forms including:-

- a) An animated amorphous or "blob" like character,
- 5 b) an animated character taking the form of a normally inanimate object such as a coin, note or betting chip, a slot machine console, a video screen, etc
- c) an animated character in the form of a person or animal, or the head of a person or animal. In the case of an animated person, the character can be a caricature of a well known personality such as a celebrity of the
- 10 establishment in which the console is installed.

The character will preferably be associated with an audio output which may include music and other sound effects to draw attention to the presence of the character, as well as voice output to communicate messages to the player.

- 15 The character preferably also delivers visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text with text being displayed, for example, in a bubble emitting from the mouth of the character.

Preferably, the animated character and any associated voice output are not gender identifiable.

- 20 The triggering of the character to appear is preferably achieved by any one or more of the following events:-

- a) a periodic trigger;
- b) a random trigger;
- c) the occurrence of an external trigger event;
- 25 d) the occurrence of one or more specific game states;
- e) the occurrence of one or more specific console states;
- f) a specific operator activity;
- g) a specific player activity.

Examples of character triggers are:

- 30 a) the occurrence of a game state where the player must make a decision where the character may appear, to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes, this trigger may be automatic or prompted by the player pressing a button;
- b) the offering of bonus prizes as incentives to players who have had long
- 35 non-winning stretches;

- c) the offering game specific bonus features to players who have had a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded
- d) announcing a bonus game or a series of games awarded to the player;
- 5 e) announcing the winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the winning console, or a console adjacent the winning console;
- f) providing wins in "near-miss situations by "nudging" a symbol into a winning position;
- 10 g) suggesting the ordering of a taxi for a player who has been observed to have been present for a long period (by way of a player trading system) or whose play is erratic and may indicate intoxication;
- h) periodically offer drink or food ordering services; or
- i) periodically provide public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered to patrons;
- 15 j) advising a player when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the interface character will explain the fault to the player.

Bonuses may be provided by incrementing the win meter, for example, by the character walking up and kicking the win meter or hitting it with a sledge hammer, or may offer the player a choice of options the current
20 selection of which may lead to a bonus prize being offered.

The character may also signal the size of a linked jackpot prize or the current probability of a linked jackpot occurring in the case of some linked jackpot triggers.

In some embodiments of the invention, the player interface character
25 changes, or its activity changes depending upon the activity of the player indicated, for example, by the rate of game play or the rate of credits bet. Alternatively, changes in the character or its activity are responsive to prize rates achieved, while playing the game.

In particular embodiments, a range of player interface characters are
30 made available to the player of the console, such that the player may choose a character from the available range. The different characters made available will have differing characteristics and personalities and the player may choose the characters to which they relate to best. Alternatively, the selection of the player interface character may be an operator function which
35 is selected in a setup mode or audit mode of the console or centrally selected using system functions.

In one preferred embodiment of the invention, the player interface character is displayed on a secondary display where the character spins a chocolate wheel at the same time as a main game is being played. The chocolate wheel may reveal a progressive jackpot trigger or another bonus condition.

The character may in some embodiments, appear on a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner to perform system functions in which case, the character may either appear simultaneously on all of the consoles in a bank or alternatively the character may only appear on one of the consoles in the bank at any one time. In one embodiment, the player interface character is animated to walk from one console to the next, disappearing from one screen as it appears on the next, such that it may duplicate the function of a club employee patrolling the bank of consoles and offering bonuses or providing other services. This feature can be used to advise players in the vicinity of a winning player when a major jackpot or progressive jackpot has been won. The players on other consoles in a bank can also be advised when the character appears on one of the consoles in the bank.

Tournaments can also be initiated by a player interface character appearing on each console eligible for the tournament to instruct or advise the players of those consoles. Alternatively, a tournament may also be triggered by other mechanisms and the winner is awarded a bonus by the character.

Player Interface

In linked systems, the player interface character may also be initiated manually by a system operator or administrator, in which case, a player interface character might be initiated when for example, the club operator notices a player becoming disgruntled and planning to leave the club, or at least the gaming area.

In some embodiments, it is necessary for the player to pay to gain access to the player interface system and to therefore benefit from the appearance of the player interface character.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Embodiments of the invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 illustrates a gaming machine with a video simulation of a rotating reel display incorporating a first embodiment of the invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of a slot machine control circuit;

Figure 3 illustrates an example of an amorphous "A" character, (with an optional thought bubble) used by the user interface system;

5 Figures 4 and 5 illustrate variations of the "A" character of Figure 4 after "morphing";

Figure 6 is a cash register character which will be used in some functions associated with the invention;

Figure 7 illustrates the gaming machine of Figure 1 with the character of Figure 3 displayed together with a speech bubble;

10 Figure 8 is a schematic illustration of a game display during a random bonus mode;

Figure 9 is a schematic illustration of a game display in a near miss situation;

15 Figure 10 is a schematic illustration of a game display during a nudging bonus mode in which the near miss situation of Figure 9 is converted to a winning combination;

Figure 11 is a schematic illustration of a plurality of machines linked to a network controller illustrating a networked user interface system;

20 Figure 12 is a state diagram of a state machine used to implement the player interface system;

Figure 13 is a help character in the shape of a question mark;

Figure 14 is a balloon character used to advise the player of a win;

Figure 15 is a fireworks display used to celebrate a large win;

Figure 16 is a champagne bottle used to celebrate a win; and

25 Figure 17 is a bell character used to announce progressive jackpot wins.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

30 In the following detailed description the methodology of the embodiments will be described, and it is to be understood that it is within the capabilities of the non-inventive worker in the art to introduce the methodology on any standard microprocessor-based gaming machine or gaming console by means of appropriate programming.

Referring to Figure 1 of the drawings, the first embodiment of the invention is illustrated in which a slot machine 40, of the type having a video display screen 41 which displays a plurality of rotatable reels 42 carrying

35

symbols 43, is arranged to pay a prize on the occurrence of a predetermined symbol or combination of symbols.

5 In the slot machine 40 illustrated in Figure 1, the game is initiated by a push button 44, however, it will be recognised by persons skilled in the art that this operating mechanism might be replaced by a pull handle or other type of actuator in other embodiments of the invention. The top box 45 on top of the slot machine 40 carries the artwork panel 35 which displays the various winning combinations for which a prize is paid on this machine.

10 The program which implements the game and user interface is run on a standard gaming machine control processor 100 as illustrated schematically in Figure 2. This processor forms part of a controller 110 which drives the video display screen 141 and receives input signals from sensors 144. The sensors 144 may be touch sensors, however, in alternative embodiments these may be replaced by a pull handle or another type of actuator. The controller 110 also receives input pulses from a mechanism 120 indicating
15 the user has provided sufficient credit to begin playing. The mechanism 120 may be a coin input chute, a credit card reader, or other type of validation device. The controller 120 also drives a payout mechanism 130 which for example may be a coin output.

20 The game played on the machine shown in Figures 1 and 2 is a relatively standard game which includes a 3 by 5 symbol display and allows multiple pay lines.

Slot machines such as those of the type described with reference to Figures 1 and 2 can be adapted to embody the present invention with
25 generally only a software change to modify the functions of some of the user interfaces of the machine.

The system embodying the present invention has an animated graphic user interface in which an animated character or symbol supplies information through visual and audio mediums.

30 The animated character or symbol is preferably non-gender identifiable. The character is preferably capable of attracting the players' attention and when verbal interaction is provided preferably this is also non-gender identifiable.

35 The system is implemented as a separate process to the primary game and acts independently of the normal functions of the machine.

The system monitors various functions, and states of the machine, game and players account and account history. The system will have a number of modes or states.

A mode or state may be activated through:

- 5 1. Random methods;
2. Triggered by game state;
3. Triggered by Machine State.

The 4 basic Modes of operation are:

1. Entertainment (comic character does comical things)
- 10 2. Information (messaging etc) :
3. Help (Character gives help information when requested. In this mode he/she can talk, point and demonstrate)
4. Payment (Pays a special prize either independently of any game being played, or as a bonus in the current game or one of the following
- 15 games, or a series of special bonus games may be initiated).

The "Pay" mode is further divisible into one of a series of money distribution modes:

- (i) Pick a box in which a player is offered a choice of a series of items or boxes and picks one to reveal a bonus prize.
- 20 (ii) Kick the win meter in which the character appears after occurrence of the trigger as illustrated in Figure 8 and morphs into the character of Figure 4 or 5 for example and then walks over to the win meter and kicks or hits it with a sledge hammer.
- (iii) Pay the looser in which a bonus is paid (say 50 credits)
- 25 when the player has had a long losing streak (say 7 straight games) and the "A" character morphs into the cash register of Figure 6, for example, and pays a bonus prize or alternatively, if the player has not achieved a trigger condition for a bonus game (e.g. 3 or more scatter symbols) the "A" character peels symbols away to reveal replacement symbols underneath which create
- 30 the trigger condition. In a variation on this, the interface character could jump onto or punch through a stationary symbol and morph into a substitute, scatter or feature trigger symbol. The character may remain in the symbol location as the special symbol for a fixed or random number of games or length of time.
- 35 (iv) Award a bonus game where the player interface character walks up to reels and spins them (or deals cards in a card game, or drops

balls in a ball game such as Pachinko or Keno). In the event that the spin etc results in a winning combination, the prize from the standard pay table is awarded.

(v) Offer a side bet such as "I bet 100 credits you can't get 3
5 Jacks in the next 3 games" requiring the player to accept or reject the bet.

(vi) Offer a bonus conditional on future game results such as "I will give you 100 credits if you can get 3 Jacks in the next 3 games".

(vii) Herald a mystery in which a character appears or possibly morphs into another character and creates an atmosphere of celebrations.

10 (viii) Nudge a reel in which, as illustrated in Figures 9 and 10, the character appears in a near miss situation (as in Figure 9) and walks over to a reel and repositions it to create a winning combination (as in Figure 10).

In a systems environment as illustrated in Figure 11, the central controller controls the actions of the user interface on each connected
15 machine, allowing coordination of modes for adjacent machines. In this configuration, adjacent machines can be caused to display the results of a large win on a nearby machine, such as when a nearby machine wins a mystery jackpot. For example, fireworks might be displayed with a message that the mystery jackpot was just awarded to machine No "X". This message
20 might only be displayed when a console is in attract mode or alternatively it might display on all machines within a certain radius at the end of the current game.

Other win display modes could use a character carrying a money bag and an animation of the character throwing notes and coins from the bag into
25 the chip tray, or a money bag exploding to shower the display in money.

The player might also be awarded \$2 to buy a consolation drink (or a drink voucher can be printed on machines with ticket printing facilities) when the player has lost a certain amount (say \$50) and is out of credit. Other features of the player interface may include a player information mode
30 which provides messages to assist the player such as message that:

a) indicate that the bill acceptor is broken, and not to put any money in until it is fixed;

b) indicates the current mystery jackpot amount and the range within which it must be won;

35 c) advises the players that there is a special feature in the game being played such as a second screen or gamble feature;

d) encourage the player to play a certain number of lines as a minimum so as to improve the chances of winning a feature;

e) explains wins and game features; and

f) tells players what buttons to press in a particular circumstance.

5 The interface while in the Information Mode, might also provide promotional messages such as:

a) advertisement for new games at the venue;

b) messages to attract players to vacant machines;

c) messages that advise the players about bonus points for turnover
10 generated; and

d) messages that congratulate player of their birthdays (via information from a player registration system).

Player encouragement messages may also be included as part of the Information Mode such as messages that:

15 a) reinforce a near miss in a game by telling the player that one or more Ace would have won them 100,000 credits;

b) advise the player to increase bet to have an improved chance of winning a jackpot;

c) encourage the player to bet on a maximum number of lines, for
20 example, messages such as "If you had been betting on line 6, you would have just won 100 credits for 5 Jacks";

d) encourage the player to repeat a previous action with a message such as "I bet you can't do that again"; and

e) tell the player why he has won, for example, 4 x Jacks pays 1,000
25 credits.

When in the Entertainment mode, the interface will include actions such as celebrating wins, and the player interface may:

a) display dancing girls to celebrate big wins;

b) display flowers when a player loses;

30 c) the interface character (e.g. the "A" character of Figure 3) may interact with game characters such as a Penguin. They may do a dance while the win meter increments;

d) the interface character may give appropriate winning messages;
and

35 e) a piece of jewellery worn by the interface character will glitter on small wins.

While in the Entertainment Mode, the player interface character may interact with various parts of the game being played on the console. For example, the interface character may run around the scorecard, possibly even going so far as to modify or swap prizes/winning combinations around. It should be noted that changing prizes around could also be part of "payment" mode.

Other Entertainment Mode functions might include the interface character playing an instrument (such as a piano) or, conducting in time with winning tunes playing on the console when a win is achieved.

In the preferred embodiment, the character that forms the basis of the proposed user interface is an Amorphous symbol.

The symbol may then "morph" to form any symbols desired and form any appendage that is appropriate. This provides a very powerful degree of flexibility. By way of example, an amorphous representation of the letter "A" is illustrated in Figure 3 and is illustrated superimposed on a console display in Figure 4.

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the cartoon thought or speech bubble, is immediately available and is a powerful interactive tool that need not be associated with sound. This may then "morph" into words or symbols. Some of the mechanisms that are possible are outlined below:

1. Starting out as the "A" symbol it can "morph" into a character based on the image of a Cash Register, with accompanying sound, when entering "award" or "pay" mode.

2. Starting out as the "A" symbol it can "morph" into a character based on an Alarm Clock, with accompanying sound, when entering "award" or "pay" mode triggered by a random jackpot.

3. Suitable appendages may be formed on the "A" symbol to represent some of the functions

- a) A Magnifying Glass or bloodhound for Analysis mode.
- b) A sledge hammer or boot when kicking or hitting the credit meter to provide a bonus.

4. Starting with the "A" symbol then stretching and spelling the words to represent different modes:

- a) Aristocrat;
- b) Analysis;
- c) Award;

- d) Assistant;
- e) Attendant;
- f) Acquisition etc.

5 5. Any number of additional devices or symbols may be represented, providing flexibility for future game concepts that have not been conceived as yet.

10 In one embodiment, the character must be kept alive by the activities of the player. For example, the character may disappear or cease to function or slow in function if the rate of play slows below a preset threshold, such as 15 games per minute, or 100 credits per minute. This feature may also have progressive effects such that if the rate of play drops further (say less than 10 games per minute, or 60 credits per minute), functionality will reduce further and ultimately if the player activity drops to a critically low level (say less than 5 games per minute or 20 credits per minute), the feature may cease to

15 function altogether. The manner in which the feature deteriorates in function and/or appearance will vary depending on the functions being provided at the time. For example, the feature may reduce the number of bonus feature games being awarded or may stop awarding feature games. If the appearance of the character deteriorates with reduced player activity, it

20 may ultimately morph into a gravestone when the functions of the feature stop altogether. The deterioration of the character's appearance may involve the character beginning to fade, or the character may become distorted or grotesque. The character may also exhibit a state of happiness when the rate of play is high and exhibit a sour expression when the rate of play is low.

25 In an alternative embodiment, the maintenance or deterioration of the character or its activity may be in response to the rate at which prizes are awarded in the game being played.

30 In one embodiment, the "A" symbol is provided with an ability to camouflage itself against any background. This would allow the symbol to blend in with the background when the symbol is not desired to be the object of focus. Providing an association with a chameleon like ability from its inception would allow the smooth blending of the symbol into any background. It would also associate the symbol with any colour, granularity or shading that similarly provides the flexibility for later implementations of,

35 as yet, unconceived game concepts.

In one embodiment, the jackpot controllers such as the Bonus Time Controller or Hyperlink are associated with a Rapid influx of money on the credit meter when a win is achieved. In such circumstances, the following events can be implemented:

- 5 a) The Cash Register may literally erupt with money. The final symbol could be any number of things.
- b) A Tornado (of Money)
- c) A waterfall (moneyfall), or
- d) Raining money along with stone clouds thunder and lightning.
- 10 The flash of lightning and rumbling thunder, like "Thor", would be particularly attention grabbing.

 e) Alternatively the morph could clap each time a player bets, perhaps slightly longer for a bet of maximum value. When the jackpot triggers, it starts to throw money (Don't clap, throw money).

- 15 In another embodiment a symbol may be given the ability to morph into an alarm clock for any EGM function that is based on timing. The prime example for this is the Tournament game. The Tournament game is a function of the EGM that is particularly linked to time. The morphing character could be used to herald the end of a Tournament by morphing into
- 20 a relevant object (alarm clock) and then issue the one-minute warning which might involve a spoken message.

In implementations of jackpot systems such as The Bonus Time Controller there are also a time related events. The final symbol could be any number of things associated with time:

- 25 a) Big Ben,
- b) An Hour Glass that shatters spilling money all over the place instead of sand.

- In yet another embodiment a character may be given the ability to morph into one of the symbols of the game. This transformation could be
- 30 triggered randomly. This then introduces an event, external to the pay table, being a variable of the "Return To Player".

 Alternatively it could be triggered by a combination and hence handled like a second feature of the standard game.

In this embodiment, the morphing character may then represent:

- 35 a) The Substitute Symbol;
- b) The Scatter Symbol;

- c) The Feature Trigger Symbol;
- e) The Free Spin Trigger Symbol.

It would then morph into one of the symbols of the game (such as the Tiger on White Tiger or the Cobra, or the Elephant etc.).

5 The morph would maintain this shape until the free game series or function was over. Hence while the free games are in effect, the morph would be moving (or slithering in the case of a snake) around the screen.

Rather than set off a set number of free games, the feature can be linked to the win meter or the player's bet. The player must win above a
10 certain amount, or alternatively the number of free games can be a function of the players triggering bet or both.

In still another embodiment, the morphing character can form an appendage that looks like a Slot machine. The character plays the machine each time the player plays. If the character wins, then a low level pay sound
15 is heard and the character then magnanimously donates its win to the player at which point it is credited to the player and a louder pay sound is now heard.

In one possible embodiment, the Morph's console will just bust to overflowing. This could be handled conceptually as a second game.

20 In another embodiment, the system is proceeded with an "Analysis" mode, in which the character spells out the word Analysis to indicate the state that has now been entered. A log of the players' bets and wins may be analysed where the character will Morph into a Gorilla, Ape or Monkey, walk over to the credit meter and apparently examine it. If the player has been on
25 a particularly long losing streak, then Morph could pull out a peanut and break it open to "Award" or transfer some credit. The "thought bubble" feature can be used to indicate that Morph thinks that the player's credit was peanuts or that it was aware that the player had had a particularly long losing streak. The cycle is complete when Morph now spells out the "Award"
30 message.

Any of the embodiments referred to above may be used in conjunction with another. Consider the combination of the character in the "second" and "fourth" embodiment in which the player could play a tournament against the character.

The control system of the present invention is preferably implemented as a State Machine.

The available states are defined as:

- a) Amorphous Mode (The standard state of the machine from which it can transmute into another mode);
- b) Analysis Mode (Initiated to investigate the current status of the internal operations of the machine);
- c) Assistant Mode (A help function for the player);
- d) Award Mode (Supplies the player with money as part of the combination, feature, jackpots or a special aid to a player on a losing streak);
- e) Attendant Mode (An aid for the attendant- supplies accounting and auditing information).

Referring to Figure 12, a state machine is illustrated in which the various states of the player interface are shown. The state machine is implemented as a separate program operating independently of and in parallel with the main game software running on the console. However the state machine has access to the status of the main game to determine various trigger conditions that trigger responses by the player interface.

The normal or rest state for the state machine is the amorphous state 80. This state is characterised by the interface character 50 either not being present or being present in the amorphous form 51 in a location that does not obstruct the operation of the main game. While in the amorphous mode, the state machine waits for external triggers such as signals from a progressive jackpot system. A random timer input is also provided which enables the state machine to trigger random actions such as random bonus payout or random bonus modes.

On a regular periodic basis, the state machine will undergo a transition from the Amorphous mode 80 to the Analysis mode 81 where it will conduct an analysis of the consol status to determine if any actions are required based on the present status. Typical actions might be:

- a) Player help - if the player is playing in an unusual manner of if the game status is at a player decision point and the player has delayed in making a decision, the player may require some help or explanation of game functions or features. The state machine should undergo a transition to Assistant mode 82;

b) Looser encouragement - if the player has experienced a losing streak of a predetermined length, the state machine should undergo a transition to Award mode 83;

5 c) Lost it all consolation - if the player has just lost their last credit and have lost more than a predetermined amount (say \$50.00) in this session, the machine should undergo a transition to Award mode 83;

d) Play pattern modification - if the player is detected as playing slowly or betting in increments that do not optimise their chance of winning, the state machine will undergo a transition to Promotional mode 85;

10 e) Return to Amorphous mode - if none of the above, the state machine should undergo a transition back to Amorphous mode 80.

When the state machine is in Assistant mode the interface character 50 will morph into another suitable form such as a question mark and provide help to the player. The help provided, will depend on the situation. If there is a delay in the player making a selection, the character will offer an explanation of the choices, or if the player is experiencing some other difficulty such as pushing wrong buttons, the character will explain the "best" way of playing the game.

20 This mode might also offer suggestions on optimising returns if the player is rejecting high return options or not maximising their chances of progressive prizes. Once the advice has been offered, the state machine will return to Amorphous mode 80.

When in Award mode 83, the interface character will morph to a new character depending upon the type of award. If the award has resulted from a system wide progressive jackpot and triggered by a system input, the character may morph into a balloon, a sparkling firework display or a champagne bottle with popping cork to celebrate the win. Similar displays might also be present on adjacent consoles with messages advising of the winning console.

30 When the award is the result of a random event with the user interface, the character will morph into a new form such as a cash register or money bag and distribute the random prize.

If the award mode is as a result of a combination which was just missed, the character will morph into a form such as a strong man and push the symbols to form winning combination or perhaps a magician will appear and wave his wand.

Award mode may also start a series of bonus games as the result of a random event, in which case the character may morph into a bell ringer, a hammer which walks over and strikes a bell or the character may become a bell 95 and ring itself.

5 Once the award is completed, the state machine will again return to the Amorphous mode 80.

10 When in Promotional mode 85, the character will morph into a form suitable for the message being delivered. If play is slow the character may acquire binoculars and examine a score board indicating that progressive jackpot is imminent. If the player is playing single credit or single line bets, the character may pull out a book of statistics to advise on betting strategies that will enhance the players chances of winning etc.

Once a single promotional message has been given, the state machine will undergo a transition to Amorphous mode 80.

15 Attendant mode 84 is provided to enable the gathering of accounting and audit information. This mode is only entered when an attendant enters a special code or uses a special key.

20 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

Dated this twenty sixth day of November 1998

ARISTOCRAT LEISURE INDUSTRIES
PTY LTD
Patent Attorneys for the Applicant:

F B RICE & CO

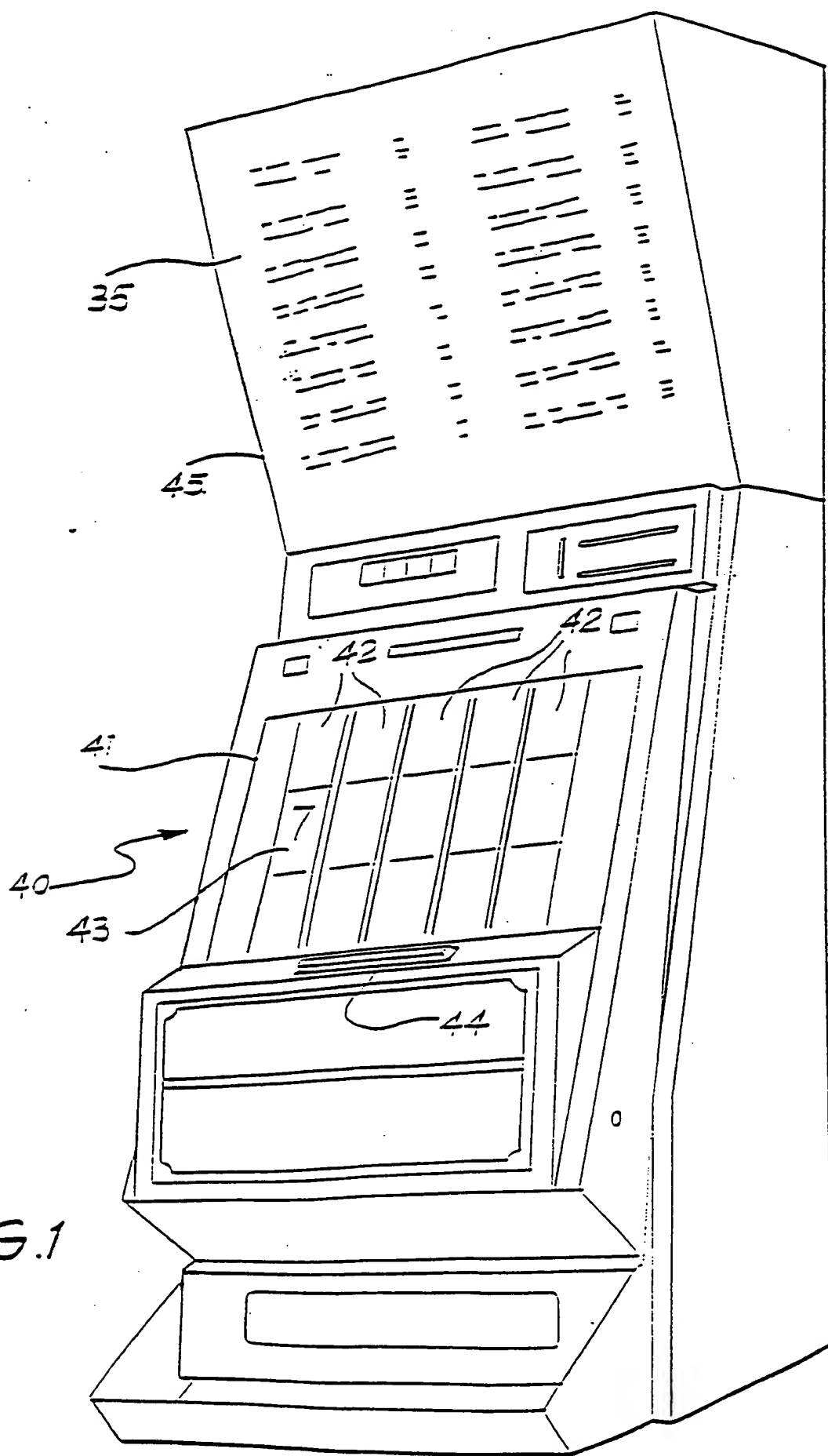


FIG.1

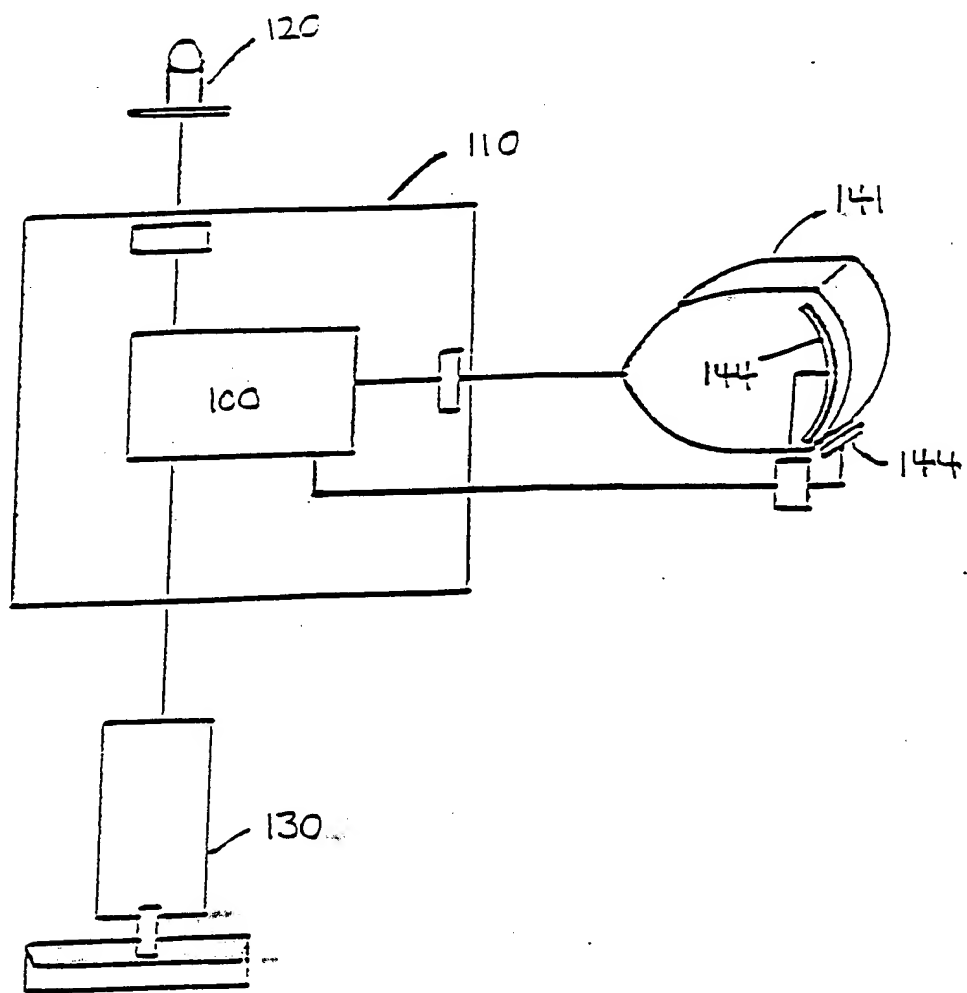


FIGURE 2

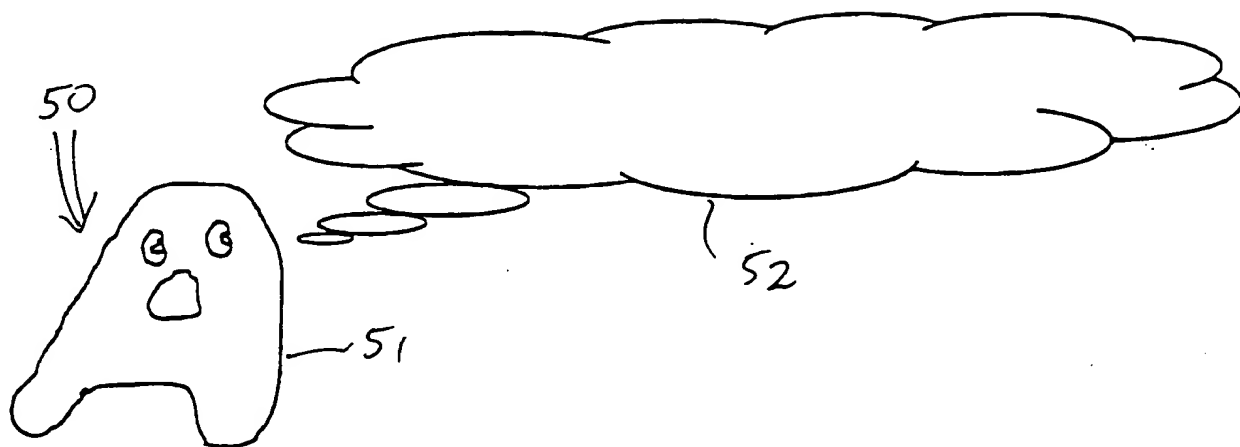


Figure 3



FIGURE 4



FIGURE 5

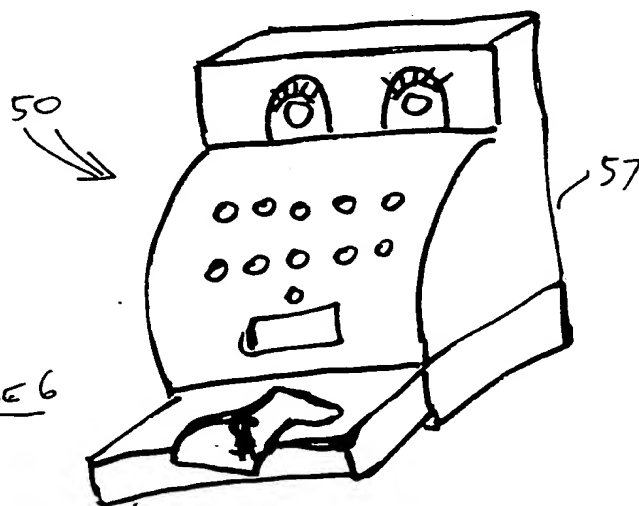


FIGURE 6

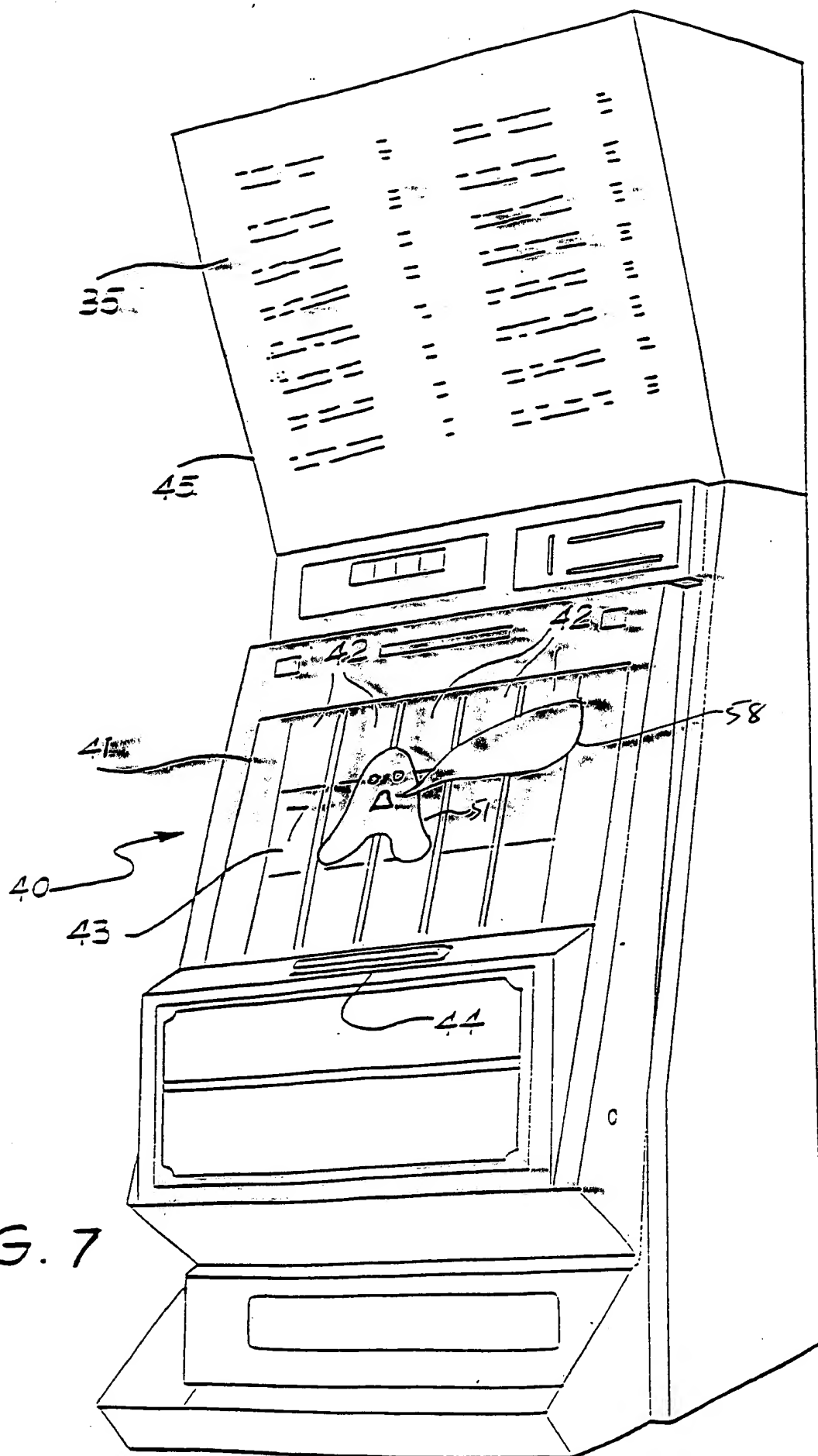


FIG. 7

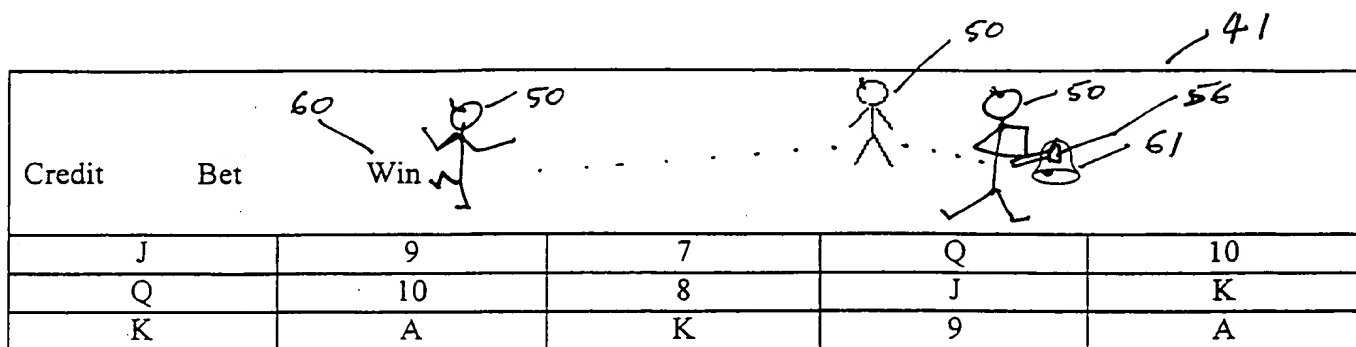


FIGURE 8

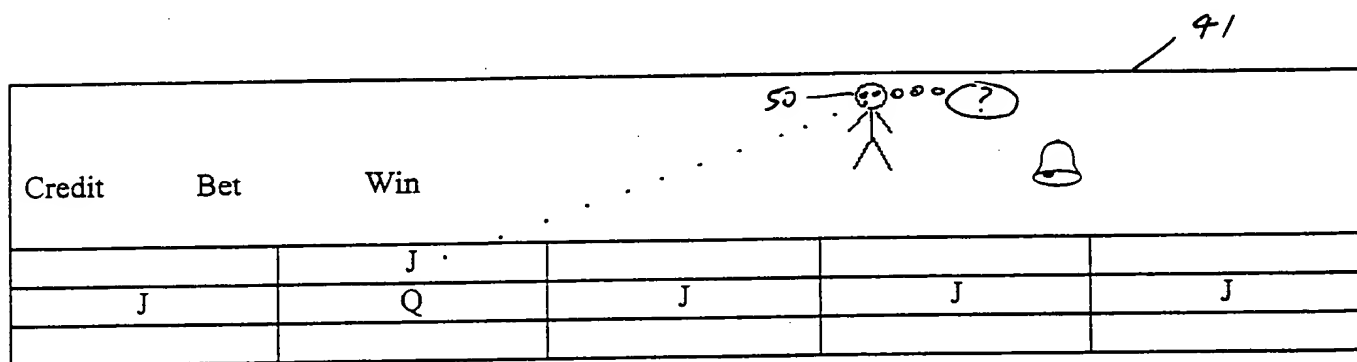


FIGURE 9

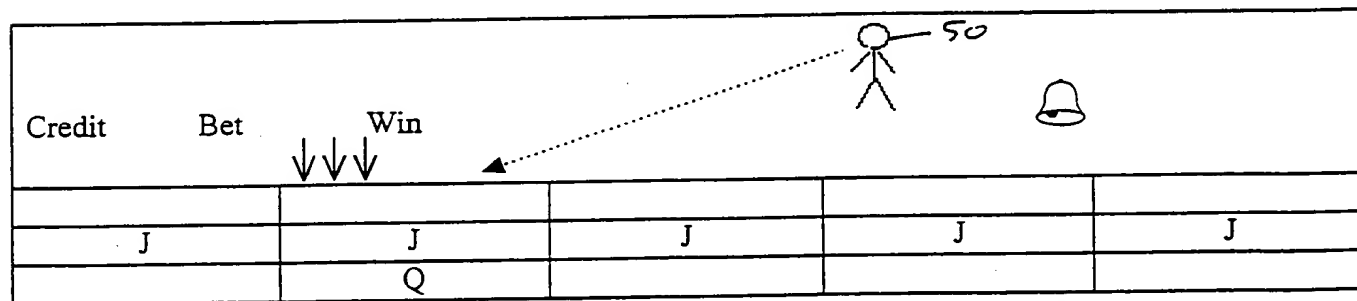


FIGURE 10

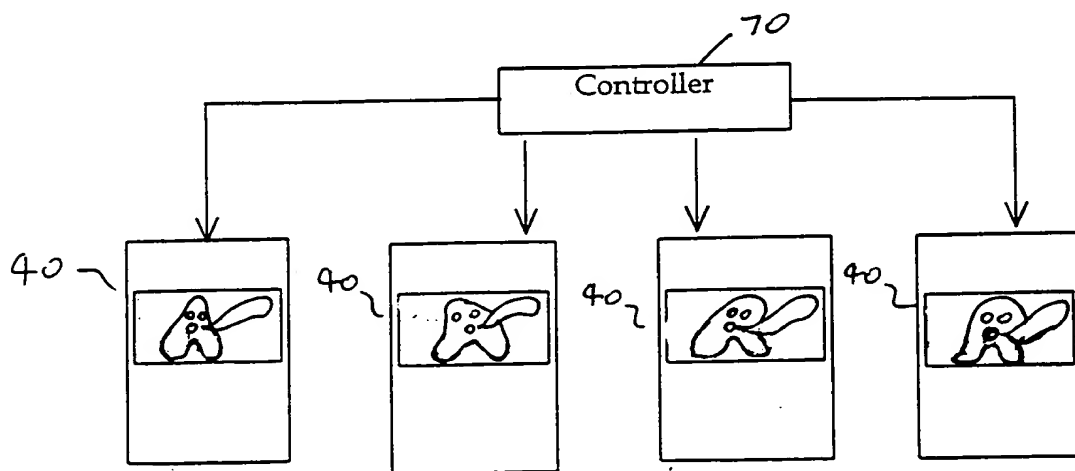


FIGURE 11

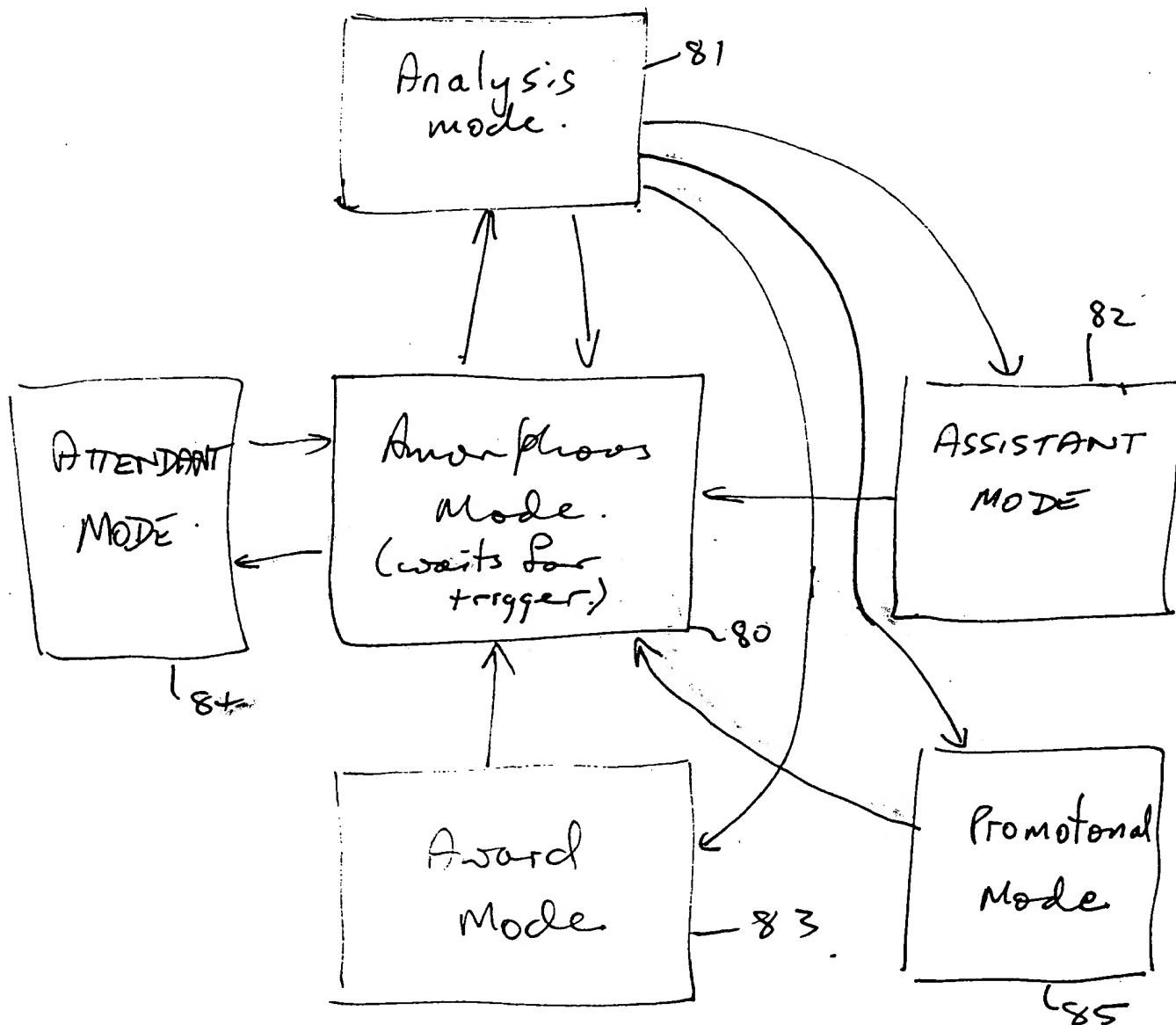


FIGURE 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

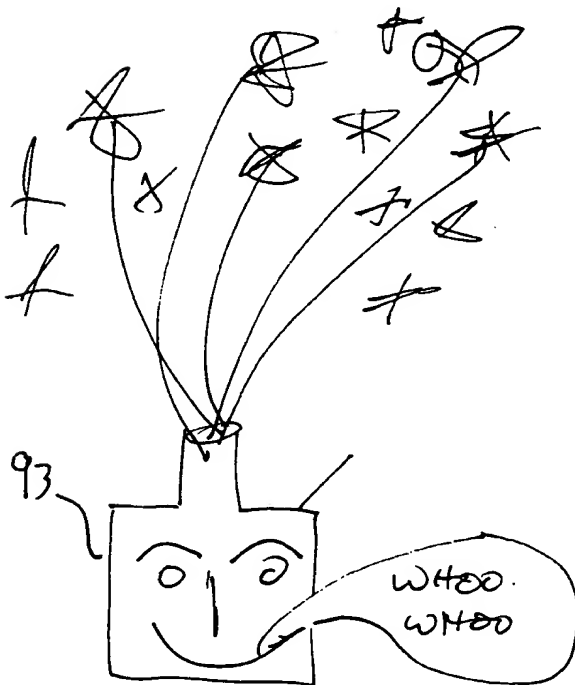


Figure 15

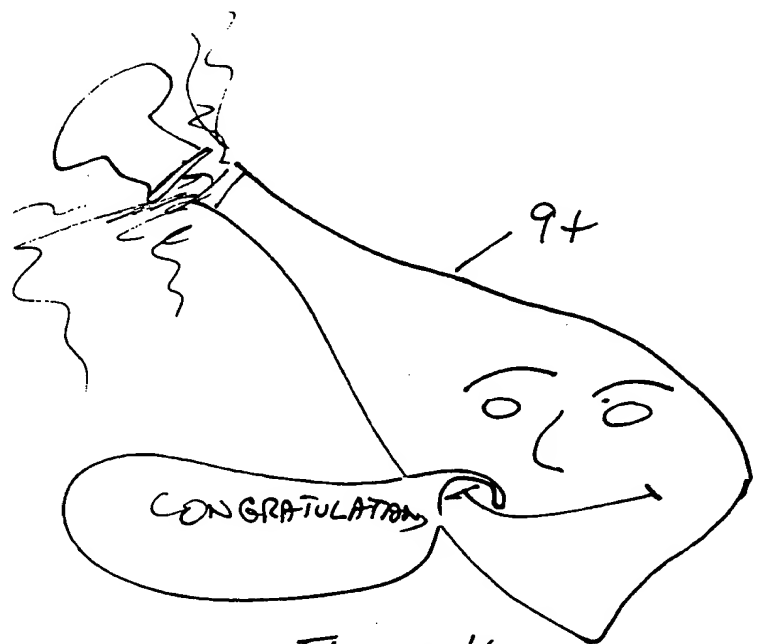


Figure 16

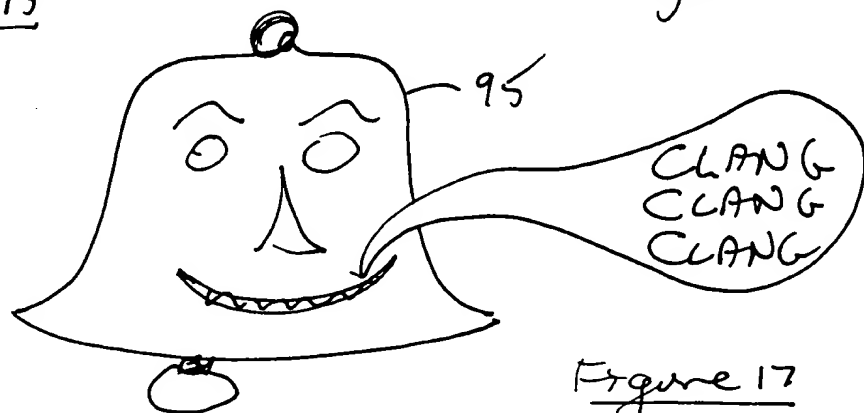


Figure 17

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